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## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

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### I.

#### THE CONGRESSIONAL LIBRARY QUESTION.

**THE** question of adequately, not to say generously and handsomely, providing to make the Congressional Library at Washington our greatest American library, and ultimately one of the greatest in the world, does not seem to be understood at Washington. A clause in the Civil Appropriations bill has been adopted by the House, which contemplates another question entirely, and takes no thought for anything more than a Library of Congress supplied with such works as the members of Congress might wish to consult.

It is proposed to enact that plans and estimates shall be secured for a library building which shall not cost more than \$3,000,000 ; and the purpose is said to be to devote this building to a mere reference library for the use of Congress, or at least to a library restricted within the limits of the proposed structure. Some members of Congress are even reported as desiring no new library at all, but a distribution of much of the present collection and a mere library for reference in the building now in use.

In either case the plan lets go a great opportunity, for the improvement of which people of all parties, and sects, and interests, ought to be heartily united. It sets aside, also, a plan already under way and much advanced, for erecting a building such as a national library needs, according to a bill passed two years since, and for some time in process of being carried out as fast as circumstances permit. A fine site, and the beginning of a proper building, are handed over under the new proposal to the Interior Department as relics of an abortive attempt to make wise provision for a great Congressional Library.

It would be difficult for Congress to judge more wrongly than in this scheme of the national interest and honor. America, richer than any other land in the diffusion of culture, in small public and private libraries and in books everywhere intelligently read, is yet poorer than any other country of the first rank in great libraries, and the Congressional Library of the United States is our one chance to make an American library on a scale representative of our place in the history of human culture. It has now something more than 400,000 volumes, and on the fingers of one hand we can count the other American libraries which go beyond about 200,000 volumes : the public library in Boston, which the city of Boston alone will make our greatest library, if the nation is too stingy to keep up the Congressional : the Harvard Library at Cambridge, which is well on beyond a quarter of a million, and the Astor and Mercantile in New York, which have gone considerably beyond 200,000.

What are these compared with the 3,390,000 volumes collected in the fifteen libraries of Paris, 2,290,000 of them in the B. Nationale alone ; the 1,500,000 of

the British Museum, with many other libraries raising the London total to about 3,200,000; the more than 1,200,000 collected in about a dozen libraries at Rome; the 1,000,000 volumes which even Russian St. Petersburg has gathered; the 1,000,000 of Munich; the 750,000 of Berlin, besides the 200,000 of the university, and over 200,000 more in smaller libraries: or even the half million each of Darmstadt, Leipzig, Strasburg, Copenhagen, and Edinburgh (in two collections); and the 400,000 or more at each of such places as Madrid, Florence, Vienna, and Oxford, in the Bodleian, besides as many more in a score of lesser libraries. If the cost should reach \$10,000,000 within as many years, Congress can yet do nothing wiser than to ungrudgingly provide both a suitable place for a great national library, and ample means for developing it on a scale commensurate with American interest in literature and American creation of literature. It is a splendid distinction, a national monument, which the United States can afford, and ought on every ground to afford now, lest history point the finger of scorn to legislators who rooted up a foundation the wisest ever planted on our soil.

EDWARD C. TOWNE.

## II.

### THE ESSENTIAL EDUCATIONAL REFORM.

EDUCATIONAL reform has occasioned a deal of clean brain-work lately through both the magazine and book press. Woman's emancipation clamor, technical training courses, public school methods, science versus classics in university training, etc., have led to solemn incubation and no little cackle over the egg. The result of the hatching, though, has been of little moment compared with the importance of one phase of the problem of reform totally slighted. This has nothing to do with pedagogy or lecture room, or, indeed, with intellectualism in any sense. It touches the moral side of life, the *esse*, not the *posse*, and sinks to the very tap-root of training. It begins with the drying up of the mother's milk, and, precious as that mother's milk, feeds the life-springs of a healthy life. This training is the cultivation of the habit of naked, unshrinking veracity, the die-sinking of the impression so deep as to be ineradicable, that to lie is to incur disgrace of the blackest possible stain. Perhaps most parents teach the evils of mendacity and punish it. But the discipline is too shallow and feeble for any sub-soiling, and the child escapes to playground and schoolroom ripe for the thistle seeds.

The ancient Persian, in the day when he was hero and conqueror, summed up the education of youth in the triple teaching, to speak the truth, to be fearless, and to be a skilful archer. In one sense only do we moderns honor the example, and then only metaphorically. We are adepts in drawing the long-bow. Cut many of the fairest fruits of civilization open, and you will find the lie coiled like a worm at the core. Sometimes, indeed, it has helped the mellowing, for deceit has a function in some of the glittering and attractive sides of culture. The so-called amenities of life cling to the lie as a convenient lubricant. Grinding competition in all lines of trade and commerce tempts the constant manipulation of the lie in some of its forms. The lie of the lawyer is almost a necessity of professional ethics. The harness of the politician and diplomat would gall most grievously without this padding. The journalist, when need be, lies, because he finds his vocation and profit in amusing the public fond of extravagant and sensational stories. The man of society—but why multiply examples? Of course the self-respecting liar sugar-coats the fact with euphemism, and is prompt to resent the charge. Disgrace consists not in the lie, but in the exposure.